

HOPATCONG BOROUGH SCHOOLS

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Title: **Hudson Maxim School Update**

Art DiBenedetto, Hopatcong Superintendent of Schools, Announces-

It has been a hectic five days. Last week, it was obvious that a leak in a pipe that delivers steam to a good portion of the Hudson Maxim School was leaking. Normally that is not a major issue, except this pipe is under the cement floor of the gym. In order to remediate the problem, the gym floor would have had to be jack hammered, the leak discovered, then repaired, and then the floor would have to be re-cemented. Given the age of the system there was no guarantee that this might not occur again. Additionally, the Board has approved closing the school in June. However most importantly, the leak was creating a steamy, vaporous environment, a very warm gym floor, a slight buckling of floor, and heated metal such as in doorways. As a result of all of that, the decision to close the school immediately was put forth.

Previous minor leaks had caused preparation for a move to begin a while before this leak was discovered. On Friday, January 25, 2019 teachers were asked to pack their classrooms and students were given the day off. Many teachers had parents offer assistance and the wave of cooperative activity towards packing, moving and re-creating classrooms in other schools began. On Saturday and Sunday, contents of the Hudson Maxim School were delivered to Hopatcong Middle School for Kindergarten and First Grade and to Hopatcong High School for the Pre-School and Multiply Disabled Class. By Sunday afternoon, the Middle School parking lot was totally filled with vehicles of teachers and volunteers who carried boxes and furniture to new classrooms and began to set up those rooms. By Sunday evening, it was obvious that classrooms in the High School were ready but that Kindergarten and First Grade teachers needed one more day. All preparation was completed by Monday evening and on Tuesday morning, students returned to their classes.

A 2:00 pm Sunday afternoon meeting held by the Superintendent was attended by a standing room only crowd. A review of what had taken place was accomplished quickly and parents asked specific questions as related to IEP implementation, bussing, start and end times, lunches, and specials (gym, art, music, etc). The crowd left with all of the information that was available and the effort received positive feedback from those attending.

The list of people to thank is endless. The general opinion of those who participated was that the community came together in a time of crisis and worked toward a goal that allowed children to return to school as quickly as possible. Administrators at the High School and Middle School found classroom space. Students and teachers at the Middle School and High School made the environment as welcoming as possible. Many teachers worked all weekend without pay. Parents and their children came and helped in any way possible. Custodians and maintenance personnel worked long hours tirelessly to accomplish the goal. PTO brought in food for workers. Food establishments such as The Grotto, Frank's Pizza and Knot Just Pizza donated food for the workers and volunteers. Many of the donations were arranged by individual citizens who do not have children in the school.

In summary, the goal has been accomplished and it is a feather in the cap of the town in that there were no distractions and few negative feelings towards what had to be done.